

THE
T R U T H
OF THE
Christian Faith Asserted:
A N D

Proved not *demonstrable* by *Natural*, but by *Supernatural Light* only ;
agreeable to the Doctrine of the People
called

Q U A K E R S.

IN WHICH
The most prevalent Arguments of
ATHEISTS and *Modern DEISTS*
are Consider'd.

By R. M. *R*

Address'd to His BRETHREN,
The CLERGY of the Church of
ENGLAND.

And of the Tree of Knowledge God said, In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,
Gen. ii. 17.

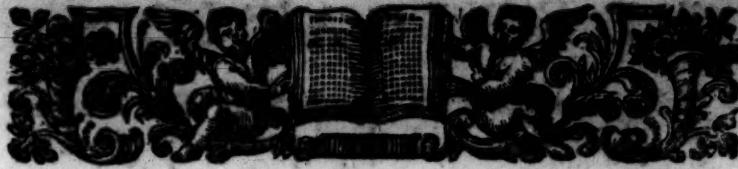
And Jesus said, Blessed art thou, Simon, for Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. Matth. xvi. 17.

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To My BRETHREN
The Establish'd CLERGY of
Great Britain.

Men and Brethren, for so you are, however Dignify'd and otherwise distinguish'd.



HAT I presume to inscribe your venerable Name to this small Tract, is not, I assure you, out of Arrogance, but because you, if any, are able to disprove the Doctrine therein maintained. You are, by outward Profession, the *Keepers and Expositors* of the *Oracles of God*, *Stewards of holy Mysteries*, and *Guardians of the Faith*; you are the *lifted Champions* in the *Christian Cause*, the *great visible Fence and Bulwark* against *Atheism, Infidelity and Error*; you are the *finest Troops*, in the whole Army of the *Church Militant*, and the *naturally best qualified* for carrying on the *War*, she is engaged in, with the *Devil*. For, tho' I do not think you the *most similar Body*, (in that your Head, like *DANIEL's Image*, seems not of a Piece with the rest) yet I look on you as the *most learned Body of Clergy* in *Christendom*, and capable of doing whatever is possible for *natural Means* to effect. But the Misfortune is, *natural Means* will not do; those are not the proper

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Arms of a Christian Combatant; The Weapons of his Warfare, saith the Apostle, are spiritual; he must have on the whole Armour of God; particularly and above all, the Shield of Faith, and the Sword of the Spirit; without which there is no quenching or repelling the fiery Darts of the Wicked. The Devil is not to be conjured and scared away with a little Greek and Hebrew, as the Vulgar imagine: Not that I have any Objection to the Study of Letters, and what Men call Learning in general; so far from it, that no Man esteems better of it than my self, knowing it to be of great and good Use to the natural World, as long as restrained to the Things thereof. But what I condemn is, the Applying it to Things of the spiritual World, and making it a Medium for proving the Truth of divine Mysteries, of which it is as incapable, as Bodies are of Performing the Parts of Spirits; to look for them therein, is to seek the Living among the Dead. A Man may, as I did, wander about in Darkness and Confusion from one Expositor to another, from Books to Men, and from Men to Books; from the Scripture translated to the Original, and therein thro' all the various Readings, which are almost infinite, and at last find himself bewildered in a Wood of Comments and Criticisms, without knowing which Way to take, or how to extricate himself by natural Means. He must here inevitably fall into the Pit of Infidelity, and so perish in the Ditch of Destruction; unless he cry to the Lord out of the Deep, and he, who is the Father of Lights, graciously descend to become a Light to his Feet, and a Lanthorn to his Path; of which there is little Doubt to be made, as will more fully appear in the following Pages. All therefore, Christian

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DEDICATION. iii

Brethren, I desire of you is, that you will *bumble* yourselves so far as to read them over, and *seriously* consider the Force of the Argument you will find to run thro' them; promising my self, that, if you can make no *just* Exceptions thereto, as I am well assured you cannot, you will either *publickly* acknowledge it, or confess it by your *Silence*: For I would not believe you capable of acting so *disingenuously*, as to cavil at it against *Self-conviction*, and without good and sufficient Reason; but rather, that you would *gladly* take the Advantage of the *Light*, tho' held out to you by an *obscure* and *inferior Hand*. I have heard, indeed, of a fine Gentleman, who, happening to be benighted, chose rather to risque his Shins in the Dark, than accept the Offer of a *Link*, because the Boy, who carried it, was not so *neatly* dressed as a fine Gentleman's *Lackey* ought to be: But this is to be more *nice than wise*; and therefore, Brethren, we hope better *Things* of you, and *Things* which accompany *Salvation*, tho' we thus speak.

All I have to fear concerning you is, the *Opposition* you will meet with from the *God of this World*, the *Love of this World*, and the *Wisdom of this World*: If you can overcome these, you will have *Victory over the World*, and by what is your *Victory* over the World to be obtained, but even by *Faith*, without which it is impossible? Take heed therefore, *Brethren*, that, amidst all that *outward Shew and Pomp of Religion* you appear with, there be not found within you an *evil Heart of Unbelief*: For, where that is, Men will *love Darkness rather than Light*, they will *spoil*, and be *spoiled*, with *Philosophy and vain Deceit*, after the *Rudiments of this World*, and not after *Christ*. The *God of this World* will then have

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have so much the Dominion over them, and the Love of this World so effectually blind their Eyes, that they will not see the Things that belong to their Peace, 'till they are forever bid from their Sight. But, that this may never be your Case, I shall always pray the Father for you, who alone is able to keep you from falling; that he will send you the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, who will teach you all Things, and lead you into all Truth: He whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not; nor knoweth him, because it knoweth nothing but what it seeth, for it lives by Sight, and not by Faith. If I were, Brethren, to use a Form for you, it should be that prescribed by your nominally visible, really invisible, CHURCH, to wit, O! Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest GREAT MARVELS, send down upon our Bishops and Curates the healthful Spirit of thy Grace, &c. Which Form, in the Manner it is worded, might be improved into an Argument, that the Compilers of your Liturgy thought as we do, viz. that it must be a Great Marvel, or Miracle, if you should have the Spirit of Grace in your Hearts; so far, I mean, as to be drawn by it, in opposition to your worldly Honours and Interests, from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God.

But, having perhaps detained you too long already, I shall not Trespass on your Patience any farther, than while I subscribe my self, dearly beloved Brethren, in all Christian Offices,

Yours Most Devoutly

Affectionate Friend, &c.

R. M.



T H E
T R U T H
O F T H E
C H R I S T I A N F A I T H
A S S E R T E D.



HOEVER reads the Scriptures will find Faith every where press'd and inculcated on him as a Duty ; and that too of such indispensable Necessity, that, without it, it will be impossible for him to please God*, attain Heaven, or escape Hell. It

seems therefore of the greatest Consequence to every one, to consider, whether he has this Faith in himself, or not ; and if not, to make it his Endeavour, by all Means possible, to acquire it.

In order to this, it will be necessary for him first to know in general what Faith is ; and next, what that particular Faith so necessary to his Salvation, i. e. what a true saving Faith in Christ

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* Heb. ii. 6.

is; and thirdly, how and by what Means it is attainable.

For the first, to wit, Faith in general, 'twill be allowed, I presume, to import no more than *Belief*; which is only the *Agreement* or *Affent* of the Mind to the Truth of a Proposition. But what is it that must determine the Mind to yield or refuse that Affent? Not the Will certainly; for then it would be in a Man's Power to believe what he would, or what he wished. He would then be able to believe himself rich and happy, when he is poor and miserable, it being doubtless in his Will to be so; but this is impossible. What is it then? nothing sure but good Evidence, either external or internal. 'Tis this and this only can force the Mind, even in spite of Interest and Inclination, to assent; and the Want of it, to dissent, or abide in a State of Neutrality, i.e. in Doubt and Distrust, according as Evidence appears to it more or less clear and convincing; which can with no Manner of Propriety be term'd Faith or Belief: Consequently is not a Faith sufficient to Salvation, or the true saving Faith we are required to have, and are searching after. What I mean by internal Evidence shall be more fully explained hereafter: For the present it may be sufficient to say, that all who believed in Christ before they saw any of his Miracles (as St. *Matthew*, St. *Nathaniel*, and others) and all who believe now, as I my self, blessed be God, and many Thousands besides do, without seeing a Miracle, believe upon that Evidence, or none at all, that can stand the Tryal. But this by the by.

Having shewn what Faith in general is, and proved it not to be at all under the Power of the Will, but a necessary Act of the Understanding:

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Christian Faith asserted. 3

Let us next see what that specifick Faith is, which the Scripture enjoins us, as absolutely necessary to the pleasing God, and saving our Souls. Now it will be allowed, I suppose, that as Faith in general is the Assent of the Mind to the Truth of any Proposition; so this is the Assent of the Mind to Scripture Propositions, as they affirm the Truth of the *Jewish* and *Christian* Religions: For they are to be esteemed but as one; since the latter is founded upon the former so far, that if one be not true, the other must of necessity be false. But as this Assent has been proved to be an Act of Necessity, and not of Choice; and as Acts of Necessity are neither morally good nor evil in themselves, so neither are they punishable nor rewardable consistently with Justice and Reason.

It seems therefore as if the Commanding and Enjoining Faith as a Duty, under the Sanction of Premiums and Penalties, were a Thing not reconcilable with the Wisdom and other Attributes of God. We may as well suppose he should command us to see when our Eyes are open, and not to see when they are shut; and to enforce the Observance of such Commands with Promises and Threatnings; which is an Absurdity a Man of common Sense could not be guilty of, much less infinite Reason.

Faith therefore, so commanded in Scripture, ought not, nor cannot be restrain'd to this simple Act of Assent, if we would have such Commands to be of God; but must of necessity be supposed to include Works also; that is, a Conformity and Obedience to all the Moral Precepts and Duties required in the Gospel, which is plainly the Import of the Word Faith in many Places of Scripture. Now as a partial Obedience

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ence, that is voluntary, can be no true Obedience, nor available to Salvation ; and as Obedience will always be in proportion to Faith, as I shall shew hereafter, being the only true Spring and Fountain of it : So I affirm, a partial Faith, i. e. a Faith attended with Diffidence and Distrust, not to be the true saving Faith required of us by the Gospel ; because, if it can be allowed the Name of Faith at all, which, as I have said, it can't with Propriety, yet it cannot be productive of that entire uniform Obedience, in which the very Life and Essence of saving Faith must be allowed to consist. And as without such an Obedience, Faith can signify nothing ; so neither can the most perfect Obedience be of any Use without Faith : For, according to the Tenor of the Gospel, the Jews of old might as well have hoped, God would have accepted a dead Dog for a Sacrifice, as that Faith should please him now without Obedience or Works, or Works without Faith *. I conclude therefore, that a perfect Faith exclusive of all Doubts, which is the only true Import of the Word, is the only true saving Faith, as being that alone which is, or can be, productive of true saving Obedience; and that therefore, all less Degrees thereof are vain.

The next Thing then, is to consider how and by what Means this perfect or saving Faith is now attainable, or may be acquired : Whether by such as are natural, to wit, Argumentation and Reasoning ; or by supernatural Means, without much Study, great Reading, and tedious Deductions and Inferences. 'Tis certain, it was generated and propagated at first Supernaturally, by the Spirit and Power of God,

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* Jam. 2. 26.

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acting on the Eyes or Hearts of Men, natural Reason having little or nothing to do in it. God then spake the Word, either outwardly to the Senses, or inwardly to the Mind, saying, as at first, *Let there be Light*, and it was done without the help of Logick; which, I believe, has never since been, nor is now, of more Use therein. I may pretend to know something of the Matter my self, having tried it to the utmost for evincing the Truth of the *Christian System*, and establishing my Faith upon the Foundation thereof: But weak and vain were the Helps it afforded me; it seemed rather to lead entirely the contrary Way, as I believe will sufficiently appear from the Sequel. And it is my Opinion, that no Faith built upon that Evidence, to wit, natural Reason, is or can be sound, and such as will be able to stand the Tryal of the same Reason when opposed to it, much less the fiery Tryal. Indeed the mercenary Advocates of *Christianity* pretend to no other Support for it: But 'tis a Question, whether they are sincerely convinced by it or not; since, 'tis certain, they might, and likely would, say as much for the Proof of *Mabometism*, if they were to be as well paid for it.

Happy then and secure is he, and only he, whom the Lord shall call to the Knowledge of the Truth, by Ways more infallible, tho' more ineffable, to wit, by the plain Evidence of the Spirit and Power of God; *not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*: As at first, and all along since the ceasing of the outward Way, i.e. sensible Miracles; and even now, more commonly than is thought or imagined by the natural Man, who perceiveth not the Things of the Spirit,

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rit, neither can be know them, because they are spiritually discerned †. Were it not for this, Christ would have left himself without a Witness in the World ; seeing he manifests himself thereto no other Way, nor has he done otherwise for at least a thousand Ages past. But now every one who believes in God, and worketh Righteousness to the saving his Soul, which I would not be thought to confine to the Quaker-Sect only ; being well assured others may be illuminated the same Way, tho' they do not teach it for a Doctrine, as that Sect rightly doth : Every one, I say, who now believeth savingly, hath the Witness in himself, which leadeth him into all Truth ; so that such have no need that any Man teach them ; being all taught of God, from the least to the greatest, the Things pertaining to God*. For what Man knoweth the Things of a Man, but the Spirit of Man that is in him ; even so the Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God that revealeth them to him **.

But let us now turn our Eyes a little from the Light, towards the dark Traverses of natural Reason, and see what is to be done in the logical Way, for the Service of our Holy Faith.

It will, I presume, be granted by every one, that as God is a Being infinitely Good and Just, if he have made Man's eternal Happiness and Misery conditional, he has fully and clearly made known such Conditions to him : It must therefore follow, by undeniable Consequence, that whatever is not fully and clearly made known or revealed to him cannot, consistently with the divine Perfections, be enjoined as a necessary

† 1 Cor. i. 14. * 1 Joh. ii. 20, 27. Heb. viii. 10, 11.

** 1 Cor. x. 11.

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necessary Condition of his future Happiness; and, by the same Consequence, it will also follow, that whatever is above his Comprehension or Power of knowing, or of which he has any reasonable Cause to doubt, after due Consideration, is not fully and clearly revealed or made known to him, and therefore not to be looked on as a necessary Condition of his Salvation.

This being so, what must we think of the many controverted Points of our Religion? by some or one of which, not only the *Christian* Faith in general, but every distinct Article thereof is brought into Doubt, and made the Subject of Dispute and Controversy.

Now one would think, if these Things were fully and clearly revealed, there could not be so much Wrangling and Contention about them; and if, as before prov'd, they are not fully and clearly revealed, the Knowledge of them cannot be made a necessary Condition of our Salvation. Again, if natural Light, or the Art of Logick, were able to beget or establish a saving Faith in the Heart of Man, 'tis hardly possible to suppose, Scepticks and Unbelievers could support their Opinions, which are perfectly inconsistent therewith, by the same Means. Indeed, Contraries may be proved by a Sophistical Way of Arguing, which is not the Case here, as will be seen by and by. But where a Thing is clearly founded in Reason, Reason cannot be brought against it to any Purpose; and if the *Christian* Faith be not clearly founded therein, it can never be savingly wrought nor established in the Heart thereby.

This now is the Language of natural Reason; and what will the natural Man say to it? He cannot but know, if he be at all conversant in
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the World, since it is become the Subject of News-papers as well as Books; he cannot but know, I say, that not only the Truth and Authority of the Scriptures, the sole Foundation his Faith can have to stand on, is daily ridiculed, and even flatly denied; but also the Reality of a Soul in Man, all Distinction betwixt Virtue and Vice, the Reason and Necessity of any kind of religious Worship; nay, the very Being of a God, in a true Sense, such as all Mankind have formed of him, are called in Question, and rendered dubious and disputable; and that by Persons of great Names and high Characters for Depth of natural Sciences, and the Wisdom of this World, which yet is but Foolishness with God; neither are their Morals, that I can understand, that is, their Lives and Conversations, so bad as their Enemies represent them.

But whatever their Morals are, or have been, it makes not much to the Purpose. The Question is, whether those Opinions advanced by them be founded upon good Reason or not? For if they are, tho' they were the most profligate of Mankind, it would shake the natural Evidence of our Faith, as much as if they were Saints. That such Opinions are not entirely groundless, and without the Appearance, at least, of good Reason, may be imagined on Account of the general Characters of those who maintain them, as above observed: But that we may see what Monsters, of natural Reason's begetting, natural Reason must encounter and intirely vanquish, before it can lay one Stone for the Foundation of a saving Faith. We will briefly run over some of the Arguments brought for the Support of each particular Tenet.

And

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And first as to the Truth and Authority of Scripture: It is so far, say they, from being the Word of God, that it is not so much as the Word of intelligent, credible and considerate Men; in that it contains Falsities, Absurdities, and many Doctrines and Facts, the Truth of which they affirm to be inconsistent with our Ideas of all the divine Perfections; such as Wisdom, Justice, Power, Goodness, Truth, &c. and that therefore it is next to Blasphemy to ascribe it to God as the Author.

To prove this several Passages both in the *Old* and *New Testament* are produced, which *prima facie*, and as they lay in their natural Dres, before an impartial Reader, must be allowed indeed to make but an odd Figure, if they do not amount to a Proof of the Charge; and granting they are capable of being satisfactorily cleared up by Glossaries and Comments, which, say they, we should be glad to see, it does not seem probable God should teach the World his Will, on the Knowledge of which the eternal Fate of his poor Creatures depended, in such a Manner as to need the Help of Comments and Paraphrases to explain his Meaning: For that, say they, it cannot be supposed he would deliver a Revelation of that vast Consequence to the World, under so much as the Appearance of Folly, Falshood, or Incongruity; so that to make it pass, Men must be forced to put their Brains on the Rack for Solutions, to reconcile it with Truth and good Sense. And if, add they, the Liberty be allowed of softening, stifling, straining, and wresting the plain Meaning of Words from the obvious and manifest Intention of their Authors; and of fixing any Sense upon them, that 'tis possible for them to bear, or the Wit of Man invent, tho'

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never so foreign and unnatural ; there is no Absurdity nor Inconsistency so gross, but may perhaps be smoothed over, and made to look even fair in the Face. At this rate, continue they, there is nothing in the Story of St. Anthony's making a long Voyage at Sea upon a Mill-stone ; or, in that of Mahomet's riding to Heaven upon an Ass ; but what may be palliated, and vindicated from the Charge of Forgery and Nonsense.

That this is the Method of our learned Commentators on Scripture, and that these Liberties are taken by them, is what the Adversary affirms ; but whether with Truth or not must be left to every Man's private Judgement who reads them. However, that my Reader may the better be able to gheſſ, I shall instance in a few Particulars, which I should gladly omit, as a Thing very disagreeable to me, did not my Method and Argument make it necessary. But since I cannot clear my Way, to the Ground I intend to build on, without it, I must beg the Reader's Indulgence, while I touch some of those ungrateful Strings, which, I assure him, will sound as unpleasant in my Ears, as 'tis possible they can in his : And therefore I hope he will not take what I shall deliver, as the Opinion of others, to be my own. *For I speak the Truth in Christ, and lie not, the Spirit bearing me also Witness, that I have laboured under great Heaviness and Sorrow of Heart for these Things* ; being one who stedfastly believe the Word of God, and the Testimony of Jesus, as shaddowed out in Holy Scripture ; shaddowed I say, for I look beyond the outward Coat, and deeper than the Letter. I can, thank him who seeth all Things, see the Jewel within the Case ; which if every one could do (as I hope the Time is not far off, there appearing now a fair

Christian Faith asserted. II

fair Dawning towards it) we should hear no more carping and cavilling at the Oracles of God: All the Arrows of the wicked, that are shot against it, sticking only in the outward Crust and Shell thereof. The Spirit, which is the Life, (for *my Words, faith Christ*, they are Spirit and they are Life*) that remains untouch'd, being as much beyond the carnal World's Power to wound and injure, as to discern and understand.

But now to the Work I am obliged, by the Reasons aforesaid, to undertake, which I shall handle as tenderly, and with as much Brevity (being, as is said, no Way pleasing to me) as the Nature of it will admit.

The first Scripture Passage then I shall mention, as taken to task by the Men of Science, and the naturally learned World, is, that (among many others I shall pass over) in the History of the Creation; where Light is said to have been created before the Sun, which is making, say they, the Effect to exist before the Cause; and a greater Blunder, as they are pleased to term it, cannot possibly be.

As a Salvo for this, Commentators assert there was another Light, prior to that of the Sun, which some of them say arose from the Collision or Agitation of the Chaotick Matter, when the Spirit of God began to move thereon: And others, that it came from the solar Particles, scattered abroad, and dispersed thro' the Æther, which, when collected together the fourth Day, made the Body of the Sun.

But this, says the Adversary, will not do: For admitting the Want of the Sun, as to Matter of Light, might be supplied by those luminous Particles, it is not to be conceived how

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* John vi. 63.

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they should do its Office of measuring Time, and dividing Day from Night, which, the Text says, was done the first Day as well as the fourth; seeing they could have no diurnal Revolution round the Earth, nor the Earth round them, it being surrounded by them on all Sides. And if the Earth had the Motion, we now suppose it to have, to wit, round its own Axis, in either Case it must have been always Day. Unless we shall imagine this luminous Matter to spring from one Side only of the agitated Chaos, or that the Spirit agitated no more than one Hemisphere of it at a Time, or that the Solar Corpuscles could act upon the Earth in the same Manner, when diffused and scattered abroad, as they did after they were collected together into one Body; or that God created a Body of Light and Heat, that was not the Sun, on purpose to do the Office of the Sun in all Respects, for no longer than three Days. All which, add they, is plainly reducing an *Hypothesis ad absurdum*, by advancing arbitrary Notions, without Evidence or Authority, the Text having not one Word in it to found them upon; neither are they alledged for any other Reason, than the Necessity of them for preserving the Consistency, say they, of Scripture, which is the utmost the Wit of Man can do for the Purpose. And if that be allowed its utmost Strength, in making Truth and Sense of Things, there can be no such Thing as Nonsense or Untruth in the World.

The next Thing caviled at is the *Mosaick* Account of the Lapse or Fall of Man; the Dialogue between *Eve* and the Serpent is made a very great Jest. To vindicate it from such Ridicule, Commentators insist, that by the Serpent is to be understood the Devil. But the Sceptick

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Sceptick says, this also is *gratis dictum*, there being not the least Hint given of it in the Text.

Again, he says, it is inconsistent with the Goodness, Justice and Wisdom of God, to curse the whole Earth for *Eve's Transgression*, and impute the Guilt of it to all her Posterity, had she been Mistress of the greatest Knowledge, Prudence and Discretion, much less when she was destitute of common Sense: For tho' she was in Stature and Bulk a Woman, yet in Reason and Understanding no other than a Child; as might reasonably be supposed, say they, were the Text silent about it, since she was but just born; and Knowledge, in a natural Way, we find to be acquired only by Age and Experience. However, continue they, the History itself confesseth it, assuring us she did not know Good from Evil: And that Good and Evil here ought not to be restrained to moral Good and Evil only, as some would have it, is plain, for that it is said they knew not that they were naked; which proves their Ignorance to be as well in Natural Things as Moral.

Now suppose, add those deep sighted blind Men, you should put a Sugar Plumb before your sucking Child, strictly charging it not to touch it upon Pain of Death; and, upon the Child's transgressing your Orders, you should storm, and swear, and curse the Child and your whole Family, and vow never more to be reconciled to it, nor its Posterity, 'till you had shewn your Resentment by murdering your eldest Son, or your self: Can it be thought, add they, a Man, who is not an Idiot or a Monster, could act in this Manner? much less that God the Sum of all Perfection should do it? — See here an Instance, which I shall enlarge upon more hereafter, how the *Wisdom of God*, as saith the Apostle, is *Foolishness with*

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with Man. Because he cannot fathom a Mystery, and see with carnal Eyes to the Depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Goodness of God in contriving Man's Salvation, 'tis in his Opinion all Stuff and Nonsense.

The next Scripture Story, as they call it, that gives them Offence, is that of the Sons of God falling in Love and copulating with the Daughters of Men; which tho' Commentators, they say, would have to be only the Marrying of the righteous Seed of *Seth*, or the true Worshippers, into the Family of Idolaters: Yet nothing can be more evident, in their Opinion, than that it is meant literally of the Angels, as all the Antients understood it, or of the Sons of God in a more proper Sense. For why else, add they, a Race of Giants, Hero's, and Demi-Gods, should be said to spring from them, will be difficult to imagine; since it is not to be supposed the true Worshipper was better qualified in the Art of Begetting than the false.

Again, the Law mentioned *Deut. xxii. 13. & seq.* tho' fathered on God, cannot possibly, say they, be of his enacting: For, to say nothing of the Indecency of it, because that alters with the Difference of Countries, Customs and Times, it is built on a false Bottom, in that it supposes Men and Women all formed alike; which being not true in Fact, such a Law cannot be administered with Equity and Justice. For the guilty, add they, will have it in their Power by Arts, to prove themselves innocent; and the Innocent, trusting to their Innocence, and using no Art, may appear guilty, and be punished accordingly.

In short those sons of Darkness and Dispute, deny the Truth of the whole *Jewish Dispensation*, affirming the History of Miracles, said to be

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be wrought to favour the *Israelites* Departure out of *Egypt*, to be not only inconceivable, but inconsistent both with itself *, and with the Justice, Equity and Goodness of God. Not only in the Encouragement there seems to be given to cheating and lying, to wit, in what is said of the Midwives and tricking the *Egyptians* of their Goods ; but also in that God is represented as acting a supernatural Part on *Pharaoh's* Heart, and even creating him on purpose onely that he might have an occasion of showering down his Vengeance upon him, and his People, by which Millions of his other poor innocent Creatures were afflicted, tormented, impoverished and destroyed, only to convince a stupid tatterdemallion Herd, so they speak, of scabbed Brick-makers, of his almighty Power ; who yet were not at all better'd nor more encouraged by it, but distrusted him in every Difficulty they met with afterward ; so that they were often upon the Point of returning to Bondage, for fear that Power which they had seen turn Water to Blood, and Dust into Animals, should not be able to provide Food for them, and keep them from Starving. Which Behaviour and Diffidence of this People, these Gain-sayers will have to be a Contradiction to the whole History of Wonders they are said to have seen : For, say they, 'tis hardly possible to conceive Men should act so stupidly and dastardly, had they had but the Reason and Consideration of Horses. Commentators indeed, add they, labour the Point mightily, as to God's hardening *Pharaoh's* Heart, insliting that it was *Pharaoh's* hardening his own Heart first, and then God's doing it afterward by way of Punishment.

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* Exod. vii. 22.

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But not one Word, say they, is to be found in the Text of any such Thing, without a most unnatural straining and forcing it.

Besides, continue they, suppose Pharaoh hardened his own Heart at first, it was, if the Account of things be true, no more than God willed and designed he should do; it being but the natural Consequence of his seeing the Devil work as great Miracles by the Hands of his own Magicians, as God did by those of Moses.

Upon the whole those Boasters of Knowledge, who, yet as to Spirituals, are the Children of Night and Ignorance, declare their opinion to be, that the Founding the Jewish Commonwealth had nothing more divine in it, than other Commonwealths and Governments in their Originals had, being an Institution purely humane, built on Maxims of worldly Policy, and formed upon a Plan concerted between Moses and his Father-in-Law; with whom the great Creator of the Universe was no more conversant, nor peculiarly and immediately acquainted, than the Goddess Eyeira was with Numa Pompilius in Establishing the Commonwealth of Rome. And in this view, they say, it is impossible to read what care there was taken, to keep every one but Moses at a distance from the Mountain and the sight of God, without thinking of the Priest of Median; who when he took upon him * to reform and correct Moses's Administration, which, if a divine Institution, was plainly taking the Work out of God's Hands, he only did that publickly and openly, which at other times he did privately and under Covert.

As for the Miracles, continue they, intermixed in the History of this Affair, on which all the Autho-

* Exod xviii. 13. & seq.

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Authority of it depends; they are but what all Founders of new Religions or new States have contrived or invented as Sanctions of their Laws, and to support the Credit of their respective Institutions. In which, tho' the Jewish exceeds all the rest both in Number and Magnitude, they are to be looked on, say they, but of a Piece with them; seeing many of them sink beneath their own Weight, thro' an Excess of Magnitude, which brings all the rest to the same Level: For if one fall none can stand.

As one Instance of such as are crushed by their own extravagant Bulk, they mention that of the Quails*, where it is said *those Birds, tho' a Land-Fowl, were brought from the Sea, and lain round a Camp of many Hundred Thousand Men, in Breadth to the Extent of a Days Journey, and in Depth, or Height from the Ground, two Cubits, that is, three Foot perpendicular.* [This Passage I believe to be an Error of Translators, or Transcribers.]

The next of this Sort, they take Notice of, is that in *Joshua*, Chap. x. where the Sun and Moon are said to have stood still for the Space of a whole Day; which, say these Men, could not be, but it must have been noted by the whole Earth, and consequently recorded in some other Histories; or, if no other Histories were at that Time writ, Tradition could not but have preserved the Memory of so remarkable, wonderful and extraordinary an Event, and have brought it down to the Hands of some later Writer, who would have inserted it among his *Memorabilia* and *Mirabilia*, which antient Authors were fond of, and made it their Business to pick up. Besides, add they, 'tis now next to certain, the Sun never moved at all since the Creation; and with

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* Numb. xi. 31.

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what Propriety then it can be said to have stood still, at Joshua's Command or Prayer, they cannot see. But suppose that to be spoken *ad captum vulgi*, or according to the Apprehension of common People, this Story, say they, is plainly overloaded, and it's Credit thereby destroyed; in that the Moon is made to stand still too, only that God's Host might be sure not to want Light, for finishing the Butchery they had in Hand; (so they speak) Whereas, say they, every one knows it could not be seen, while the Sun remained fixed, as the Text says, in the midst of Heaven. And it is not to be supposed, add they, God would suffer it, the Sun, to set, or go down, 'till the vindictive Work, he staid it for, was fully perfected.

To get rid of all these Difficulties, and others, this Miracle is encumbered with, which I shall not mention, some Commentators make no more of it than this, that what is called the Sun's standing still, and the Length of the Day that was thought to proceed therefrom, was occasioned only by the Refraction or Reflection of the Sun Beams after setting, from some watery or snowy Clouds. Now tho', say the Adversary, 'tis impossible the Sun should be refracted or reflected in such a Manner, for so long a Space as that of a whole Day, either natural or artificial; yet, if we grant it, 'tis making it still but a natural Effect, and no Miracle: And teaches us, say they, what to think of Scripture History, and the Wonders therein recorded.

Numberless other Passages in the *Old Testament* are objected to by these learned Unbelievers, and bookish Night-Crows, who, like the darling Bird of the Goddess they worship, hate and despise the Light; thinking themselves wiser than

than he that made them, tho' as ignorant as the wild Ass's Colt : Numberless other Passages, I say, do these Men cavil at ; as that in the 19th Verse of the first Chapter of *Judges*, where, they say, God's Omnipotence is denied or made doubtful. And in the 19th Verse, Chap. vi. of the first of *Samuel*, his Goodness and Mercy seem as much brought in Question, by representing him as beyond Measure cruel and revengeful : For so, say they, he must be thought, if he destroyed Fifty Thousand Men and upwards, for so small an Offence as but just looking into the Ark ; five had been enough in Reason to have made Examples of, and to destroy on any other Account is, say they, the Property of a merciless and blood-thirsty Temper.

However, numerous as they are, I will not grate my own, nor Reader's Heart, with the Recital of any more of them ; but hasten to the *New Testament*. And even here I must beg to be excused from raking any Infidel Objections out of the Dirt, thrown on the Letter and Outside of the written Word by a late great Clerk, who was a listed Soldier, but deserted from the standing Army of Christ, as it would be thought : Tho', God knows, it fights his Battles not with the proper Weapons, the Shield of a true saving Faith, and the Sword of the Spirit ; but with the Sword of humane Learning, and vain Philosophy, which are too weak to repel the fiery Darts of the Wicked ; as will more fully be proved hereafter. I must beg, I say, to be excused from repeating any of this Man's Charge against the Words and Works of the *Holy Jesus* ; thinking his Expressions too harsh, and that his Spirit boiled too high : Tho' I cannot but hope he is not far from the Kingdom of God ; in that

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he glanceth so near by the Truth in his Speculations, that it is not improbable he may have had some small Glimpse thereof.

In speaking therefore of the Cavils, risen against Passages occurring in the New-Covenant-Scripture, I shall be very brief; confining my self to two only, namely, that in *Mat. xxiv. 34th Verse,* *Verily, verily, I say unto you, this Generation shall not pass away, till all these Things* (one of which they contend to be the End of the World) *are fulfilled;* which they insist to be either false Prophecy, or false History. The other is the notorious Disagreement, as they express it, between those two Evangélists; who were the only Eye-Witnesses, or to be supposed so, of the Facts they record; the other two, *Mark* and *Luke*, being, say they, no other than hear-say Writers.

As to the first, Commentators deny the End of the World in a strict and proper Sense to be at all spoken of, or foretold in the mentioned Chapter; insisting that what is said therein concerning it, is to be understood as relating only to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the *Jewish State*. But, say their Opposers, they must then allow the End of the World in the Sense they mention, not to be foretold or spoken of at all in the whole Bible: For the same Words, add they, that are agreed, even by themselves, to relate thereto in other Parts of Scripture, are employed to express it by here in this Chapter; and he that will argue they signify one Thing in one Place, and another in another, will argue against first Principles, and is to be looked on, say they, as a Wrangler not worth Notice, nor to be disputed with.

Besides, continue they, 'tis plain the Question (Verse the 3d) which occasioned all the prophetic

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tick Discourse in this Chapter, was twofold, relating to the End of the World in the truest Sense, as well as to the Destruction of Jerusalem: Tell us, say the Disciples, *when these Things shall be*, i. e. when the Ruin of the Temple, which he had told them was some Time or other to happen, should be compleated; and also, *what shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World*. Now if, say they, we are to understand all that follows, by way of Answer, to relate only to the first Part of the Question, to the Destruction of the Temple, then the latter had no Answer at all made to it: Whereas, say they, it is not possible for Words to make a Thing plainer, than that as the Question was twofold, and related to the Destruction of the Temple and the World too, so did the Answer; and he, add they, that reads the Chapter through, and can think all that is said therein to have but one Reference, and that to the Destruction of the Jewish State, without any at all to the Day of Doom or final Judgement, must offer Violence to his Reason, and may as well bring himself to believe the Book of the *Revelations* related to nothing but the Civil Wars of England, or the Battle of Hochstet.

I might add hereto, what these Men farther offer in Confirmation of this their Opinion, to wit, that the Apostles, and primitive Disciples, as appears from several Passages of Scripture *, were induced by this Chapter to believe and expect the final Judgment or Destruction of the World would follow soon after that of Jerusalem, or before that Generation, or they themselves were all passed away from off the Earth. But I shall wave it, as being weary of a Work

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* *John ii. 18. 1 Thes. iv. 15; 17, &c.*

I take no Pleasure in, and haften to the other Infidel Objection I mentioned, which is the last I shall trouble my self or Reader with, namely, the Disagreement they charge to be between the two Eye-witnessing Evangelists.

The Instances, they pretend to give of this, are first in the Matter of *Christ's* foretelling his Death and Resurrection, which *Mattbew*, say they, assures us he did several Times and that but a few Days before it was accomplished *, taking his Disciples apart for the Purpose, and instructing them in every particular of it; nay, that it was so publickly known, the whole *Jewiſh Sanhedrim*, that is, the whole Body of the Rulers were informed of it: Whereas, add they, *John*, Chap. xx. ver. 9. declares he was ignorant of it, i. e. of his being to rise again from the Dead, to the very Morning it came to pass. Commentators, on the Authority of one of the Evangelists **, say, that tho' he told this, and all the rest of his Disciples, plain enough of it; yet they either did not understand him, or not believe him: Wonderful strange! say those Scoffers, especially when it is said in one of those Places, *Mat. xvii. 23.* they were exceeding sorry at hearing of it, i. e. of his Death.

But now, continue they, can any one persuade himself, or any other, to believe, if *John* had ever been told his Master was to die and rise again in the Manner it is said he did, that he could see the former Part of the Prediction verified, as he must, being a Spectator of it †, and not think of the latter? Or that when he came to the Sepulchre, and found the Body not there, it should not recur to his Thoughts? But instead thereof, that he should declare his Belief, of what the Woman told

* *Mat. xvii. 23, &c.* ** *Luke xviii. 34.* † *John xix. 26.*

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told him, ver. 2. to wit, that the Body was carried off, or removed by some other natural Means, which is the Import of that 9th Verse ; and then add, that his Reason, for so believing, was, that they, that is, himself and Brother Disciple, or all the Disciples, knew not the Scriptures, that he was to rise from the Dead at all ? He, say they, that has Faith for this, may remove Mountains; unless he will make a Miracle of it, as *Luke Chap. xviii. 34*, seems to do, and suppose, while the Master was instructing his Disciples in the Nature of his Kingdom, and what the Event of his preaching it to the World would be, he employed a supernatural Power in stupifying their Understandings; so that they might not believe him, or comprehend his Meaning : Which, according to them, is an Inconsistency too gross to be mentioned.

The next Thing, in which they say those two inspired Authors disagree, is in the Accounts they give of their Master's Appearing to them after his Resurrection ; and the Silence of one of them, as to those astonishing Events that are said by the other to have accompanied his Crucifixion, or follow'd it, to wit, the Darkness over the whole Land (that is, perhaps, say they, a cloudy Day) the Earthquake, the Rending the Temple, and, what is more than all the rest, the Resurrection of many Bodies out of their Graves, and walking into, and visiting People in the City: None of which, say they, are mentioned by St. John, who yet was present, and stood by all the Time of his Suffering, as is before observed. To account for this Commentators assert, St. John, who writ last, designed his Gospel for a Supplement to the other three : But, say their Opponents, if this were so, 'tis strange
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he should no where intimate he design'd it for such a Supplement; and stranger yet, add they, he should insert several Facts therein, and those of less note, which all the rest particularly mention.

But let it be, say they, a Supplement, and grant St. John omitted on that Account to repeat those great Wonders St. Matthew relates, Pray what, add they, was St. Matthew's Reason for omitting what St. John relates, concerning the several Interviews and Conversations, they had with their Master, after his Resurrection in Jerusalem; especially, at that extraordinary Juncture, when their diffident Brother St. Thomas was convinced in so ample a Manner, to wit, by putting his Fingers into the Prints of the Nails, and thrusting his Hand into the Wound in his Side? Of all which St. Matthew has not one Word; but, instead thereof, talks only of a Meeting they had with him upon a Mountain in Galilee.

Now, continue they, Matthew's Gospel was no Supplement; he was the first of all that writ, and present at all the Meetings and Interviews, they had with their risen Lord in Jerusalem, if John says true: How comes it to pass then, say they, he takes no Notice, nor makes the least Mention, of any of these Things?

In short, say they, no one can believe or think the Author of St. Matthew's Gospel ever saw Christ at all after his Resurrection in Jerusalem, or anywhere else, if he did not on the aforesaid Mountain, for he seems to speak dubiously of it; neither can it be supposed, he had so much as heared, at the Time he writ, of his having been seen by any one else in the aforesaid City, or any other Place, but the beforementioned: For they insist, it is not possible a Man should write a Narrative

rative of Facts, which no one had writ on before, and therein not mention such extraordinary ones as these are, and so much to his purpose, had he been an Eye-witness of them, or but heard them reported to him upon any credible Authority.

I have now laboured my Way through half, and, I think, the worst half of the melancholy Journey my Argument has forced me to take: And it being a foul Road all the Way, I cannot but fear some of the Dirt, in spite of all I can say, will stick about me. All my Comfort is in the Sincerity of my Intentions; for, however I may be censured, I am truly and really a Believer of the Truth and Authority of Scripture, understood in a spiritual and divine Sense. I profess to think the whole Bible justly to deserve the Title it has, of God's Word, and God's Book; and, as such, I esteem it with great Reverence. I look on it as a Light shining in Darkness; as the Sun in a Cloud, as the King's Daughter, all glorious within, tho' wrapt about with an outer Garment, in which some seeming Rents appear. And I really think, those, who have gone about to mend them with Patches of natural Light and humane Inventions, have made them but worse; For while the great Steeple Doctors and Book-worms in Pay, prompted by an officious, indiscreet Zeal, have been at Work to vindicate Scripture from all Mixtures and literal Allays; endeavouring to have it thought more than it is (or than it will ever be in their Power to persuade their blind Brethren, the Book-worms out of Pay, to believe it to be) it has happened they have made it thought less than it is, and but the more exposed it to the Contempt and Ridicule of an unenlightened, free-thinking World.

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And now to the remaining Part of my unpleasant, tho' in the End, I hope, profitable Undertaking. The second Monster I mentioned, to have proceeded of late from the dark Womb of worldly Wisdom, was, that which denies the Reality of an immaterial, independent Substance in Man, called Soul; maintaining Life and Soul to be the same Thing, and no way distinct; consequently that Death, putting an End to Life, puts an End to the Soul also.

Now this shocking Position; they pretend to prove by indisputable Maxims of Philosophy, and the essential Properties of humane Nature, universally consented to and allowed: As thus,

Man, say they, is defined to be a rational Animal, compounded of Body and Soul; the living Body constitutes him an Animal, the Soul makes him rational.

Reason then, or Rationality, according to them, is an essential Property of the Soul, or that in which its Essence or Nature consists; so that where there is not Rationality, or the Faculty of Reasoning, there is no Soul: For a Thing cannot be without such Properties, as are essentially necessary to its Constitution.

If then the Faculty of Reasoning depends on the Body, and the Body be Matter, the Soul depends upon Matter, and consequently is no immaterial Substance: For *Quod pendet a materia est materiale*, is an established Maxim; and if the Soul be material, it follows also, that it is in its Nature mortal and perishable.

That it depends upon Matter in its original Birth and Production, must be granted by all such as hold it to be *ex traduce*, which, if I mistake not, is the Opinion which now generally obtains among the most orthodox; and, if it be so,

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so, it must have the same Dependance thereon for its Subsistence afterward: For its another uncontested Verity, that every Thing must necessarily subsist in, and depend upon, that elementary Principle, out of which it is formed, and by which it is constituted, *i. e.* what ever is essentially necessary as a Principle to the Production or Generation of a Thing, is essentially necessary to its Conservation and Subsistence afterward. If therefore the Soul be the Result of Matter, or acknowledge Matter as an essential Principle in its first Formation and Existence, it must necessarily depend upon Matter afterwards for its Support and Conservation in that Existence: And if it be *ex traduce*, it must some Way or other acknowledge Matter as a Principle; and consequently if a Substance, be a material Substance; for an immaterial cannot possibly result from Matter, or acknowledge it as a Principle in any Sense whatever.

But suppose, continue they, the Soul be *ex infusione*, which will draw a frightful Train of Consequences after it, Experience proves it to depend upon Matter, as to its Operations, *i. e.* Acts of Reason; which we perceive manifestly to grow and increase in Strength, and then again languish, decay and die with the Body, and sometimes before it, if the Brain happens to be unequally injured and affected.

Instances of this are daily to be met with: How many Persons have we seen of the brightest Parts, and soundest Reason, reduc'd by a Fall, a Fright, or a Fit of Sickness, to Folly and Idiocy? Nay, sometimes to so perfect a Stupidity and Distraction, as that their reasoning Faculties seem totally abolished and subverted; and that sometimes, as is said, while the Body remains sound and in Health, as to all its vital Functions?

If then those Faculties, are of the very Essence of humane Souls, so as that where one is not, the other cannot be, (as is most certain, if the common Notion and Definition of humane Soul be right) it will follow, that the Soul depends on the Body, *i. e.* on Matter; not only *quoad operari*, but also *quoad esse*, or as to its Existence; unless we shall suppose it to be where no signs at all of it appear, and think the Faculty to continue sound, after all its Powers of acting are lost, and totally destroyed. We may as well say the Body lives, when incapable of performing any one vital Function; as, that the Soul remains entire, after its Capacity of exerting rational Operations are impaired, or entirely abolished.

These and many other Arguments are brought, to prove this Notion of an independent Substance in Man, called a Soul, to be a meer Mistake, and a vulgar Error; which, if they do not amount to a Demonstration of it, as God forbid they should, it will be allowed, I presume, from the Specimen here given of them, not to be without the Appearance at least of so much force of natural Reason, as that it will not be in the Power of every Degree of the same Reason to refute them.

The third Opinion, I mentioned, was, of those who deny there is any such thing as Virtue or Vice in the World; asserting, that tho' humane Actions, politically considered, may be distinguished into good and evil; yet in a moral Sense they are all the same, none better nor worse than others, and consequently no merit in them, either of Rewards or Punishments.

This monstrous Doctrine they undertake to prove by another equally shocking, to wit, that **Man is not a free Agent, nor his Actions the Effect**

Effect of Liberty and Choice, but meer Necessity ; which, if true, must be allowed to be inconsistent with the Notion of any Merit in them, or moral Distinction between them, that entirely depending on the supposed Liberty that attends them.

To make out this want of Liberty in humane Actions, they argue thus ; Man, say they, has no Liberty to act contrary to his apparent Good, but under a Necessity of doing that which appears to him to be most conducive thereto : But, having no Liberty in judging and determining what is most conducive to his good, but under an absolute Necessity of judging and esteeming Things as they appear to him, tho' different perhaps from what they really are, he has no Liberty of acting contrary to that Appearance, and consequently cannot be said to be a free Agent.

I know not which of these Propositions can be denied. It will, I presume, be granted by every one, that a Man cannot direct his Actions to any other end than his own Good. He may, and often does, pursue Evil, and bring it upon himself ; but then it is always under the Appearance of Good, either positively or comparatively, that is, to avoid a greater Evil : For so a Thing may be esteemed a Good, that is in itself an Evil.

It is also evident a Man has no Liberty to be of what Opinion he pleases, as to the Goodness of Things, so as to make himself think that to be good for him which appears to him Evil, or that Evil which appears Good. He may and ought to be careful, circumspect and considerate, that he do not mistake one for t'other ; but can't help judging and esteeming Things to be what they

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they appear to him, nor to act otherwise than the Judgment he makes of them directs. And thus again this opinion is not without the Colour and Shadow of Reason.

A fourth Article of our common Faith, which I mentioned as brought into Question, and even flatly denied by some carnally learned Men, is, the Reason and Necessity of performing any religious Worship, or what we call Service to God : And this, tho' the plain Consequence of the foregoing Doctrine, they yet endeavour to prove by other Arguments, such as are taken from Experience and Observation, of what passes in the World.

As God, say they, is incapable of receiving any Good or Ill by our Actions, so he neither commands nor expects any Services from us ; nor has any more Regard to our Doings or Sufferings, than to those of other Animals : For having planted or imprinted, in the Nature of every Species, such Principles, Appetites and Propensions, as are necessary to direct them to the several Ends for which they were created, and in which their own Happiness, as much as was intended them, is effectually secured and provided for, he has no more to do with them, or for them, than to support and continue them in the Ways in which they are respectively constituted.

This bold Assertion they pretend to demonstrate, by the apparent Disregard and Unconcern of the Deity at what passes in the Course of this World, with Respect to the Doings, Sufferings, or Services of Man.

If, say they, God was pleased or displeased with one Action more than another, it is not to be supposed but that he would frequently, in the Course of his Providence, give evident Tokens thereof ;

thereof ; by rewarding the Good, and punishing the Evil-Doer, in some uncommon and extraordinary Manner, so as that his Dislike or Approbation might visibly and demonstrably appear : Whereas no such Things, add they, is ever now to be seen, nor has been so much as pretended, by any Author of Credit, to have been seen for at least a Thousand Years back ; and, even for a Thousand Years and more before that, it was, as the wise King of *Israel* observed, as it is at this Day, to wit, *all Things happen alike to all*. Providence makes no outward Distinction in dispensing its Goods and Evils among Mankind; nothing befalls the Sinner, but what the Saint has a Share of in his Turn ; the former oftentimes seeming to be rewarded, while the latter is punished.

The most daring Infidel, add they, and Blasphemer, who is at open Defiance with God, provokes not his Vengeance, nor moves him to shew his Resentment in any remarkable Manner, different from what is, and frequently has been, the Fate of his, supposed, best Servants, and dearest Children. The secret Malefactor often escapes undetected, and unpunished ; while the innocent, tho' tried by God alone, as of old, or by God and his Country, as now, is condemned, and falls by the mistaken Hand of Justice. In which Case, if in any, one would think God should shew himself mighty to save, and give the World a demonstrable Proof that he judgeth in the Earth, and has the Concerns of Man more at heart, than those of his other Creatures.

Again, say they, as it is next to certain, from what has been observed, that God shews no REGARD to the Morality or Immorality of our Actions ; so neither is there any Reason to think, our Worship

Worship or Service is more noted by him ; or, that he requires or expects any at all of us : For, if he did, 'tis not possible to imagine, add they, but he would make some Distinction between those who worship and serve him, and those who do not ; and again, between those who do it in the Manner and Method approv'd and appointed by him, and those who do it otherwise, (since the several Ways of doing it are almost numberless) unless we shall suppose all to be alike acceptable to him, and approved by him ; which is what these worldly wise Men will not dispute with us, provided we allow none at all to be equally so.

But supposing, say they, one Way of Worship, or one Kind of Religion, better and more agreeable to his Will than another, 'tis but reasonable to think some evident Mark and visible Tokens of his Approbation and Respect would appear therein ; 'tis not to be conceived but the Assemblies of such Worshippers should, as of old, have the divine *Scechinah* in the midst of them, or be honoured with some other such peculiar Grace or Glory, Priviledge or Power, that no other religious Community upon Earth enjoyed, so as to make a sensible and infallible Difference between them.

Whereas we find not, say they, the least Appearance of any such Thing ; all sorts of Religions, and all Sects in the same Religion, are, for any thing appears outwardly, equally agreeable and pleasing to him.

The *Christians* who bless the Name of *Jesus*, are visibly no more respected nor favoured by God than the *Jews*, who once made it a Part of their publick Worship to curse him, and are supposed to do the same still in private ; the *Jew*

Jew, again, hath nothing to prove his better Acceptance with God, than the *Mahometan*; nor the *Mahometan*, than the *Heathen Idolater*, who worships Stocks and Stones; nor either of them more, than the wild *Indian*, who worships nothing at all that we know of.

The Worshippers of every Denomination, continue they, think themselves in the right, and all others in the wrong; but can prove it by no Instances of Fact, or any external objective Evidence, sufficient to satisfy a reasonable Man. Their Prayers are all alike efficacious, and successful, being attended with the same signal Returns from their respective Deities; which however, say these Men, are never other than imaginary, and what would have happened if they had never prayed at all; being but the unavoidable Effects of natural Causes, which, in the general Course of Providence, every Man meets with, and is entitled to, whether he be a Worshipper of *God* or *Baal*, *Mahomet* or *Sommonokodam*: For they will not allow Prayer ever to produce any real Effects; they agree with our religious Neighbours the *Dutch* in two atheistical Proverbs, they have among them suitable to their Purpose, *to wit, that God always fights on the strongest Side; and that the Skip of a Frog is of more Force than the Prayers of the Saints.*

In short, what they say is this, that Experience, the surest Knowledge we have, makes it evident, even to Demonstration, that nothing in the Power of Man to do or suffer in this World, no sort of Sin, no kind of Service or Worship, no degree of Torment, Milery or Affliction, Wrongs or Hardships, no Prayers, no Tears of any the most faithful, and supposed dearest and most favoured Man, or Community of Men, upon

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Earth, are able now, or have been able for many hundred Years past, to move the Deity an Hair's Breadth out of the common Track of Nature, or beyond the ordinary Course of Providence, upon any occasion whatever ; either for the Relief of the Miserable, the Vindication of the Innocent, or Detection of the Guilty, the Encouragement of Virtue, Discouragement of Vice, or Satisfaction of the doubting Soul, who would willingly believe his Religion to be true if he could ; even tho' it seems not only reasonable, but absolutely necessary, for preserving his own Honour, and rescuing the World from *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, on which the eternal Happiness or Misery of his poor Creatures depends, if our common Faith be true.

However, nothing of this, say they, is able to do it, and that therefore it is certain, God has now no Regard to our Doings, Sufferings or Services, farther than he has taken care for and secured in our Make and Constitution : Which is an Argument, add they, he never did since the Creation regard them more ; because, if he had, 'tis not possible to conceive why he should have neglected them for so many Ages past, and appear so unconcerned and regardless about them now ; since the Reason and Necessity of his shewing such Regard is now, and has all along continued, the same it ever was. Unless, continue they, it can be supposed infinite Wisdom, Justice and Goodness, for all are concerned in it, should expect and oblige us to rely wholly for this on the Credit of dead Witnesses, whose Veracity is by Multitudes of Men of great and good Characters, and nominal Christians too, as well as others, called in question, and even plainly disproved ; and whose Authority appears to
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be no better than many other such dead Witnesses, which those very Persons who contend for the Truth of these, and all other People of Sense and Reason, give up for false and corrupted Evidence : Nor is it possible, add they, we should believe any thing, if we never so much desired it, upon defective Proof ; as that must be allow'd to be, which stands convicted of Errors and Mistakes, to say no worse.

These now are the Reasonings of natural, unenlightened Minds, which are Strangers to the hidden Things of God, and the *Spiritual Kingdom of his Son in the Heart of Man* ; wherein he manifests his Reign, exemplifies his Power, and demonstrates, by the infallible Testimony of the Holy Ghost, that there is a *God who judgeth in the Earth, and that loveth Righteousness and hateth Iniquity* ; leaving no room to doubt his Noting and Regarding the Doings, Sufferings and Services of his Creatures : Tho' the Eye of Flesh perceives nothing of it, neither can it, as is before observed ; it being only discernable by the Eye of the Spirit, and not to be made evident by the *Dealers in natural Science, and vain Philosophy*, who live by Sight, and not by Faith.

The fifth and last Position I mentioned, as advanced by some of these great Boasters of natural Reason, was, that which gives the finishing Stroke to all the rest, namely, the flat Denial of the Existence of any God at all ; for that is plainly the Doctrine of those who make him the *Anima Mundi*, or the Soul of the Universe ; as will plainly appear hereafter.

But, to be a little more particular, this opinion supposeth the Universe to be but one great Aggregate, consisting of Soul and Body, analogous to the human *Compositum*, or Man, which

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has been of old called the *Microcosm*, or little World, as being an exact Model and Epitomy of the great one.

But, if I take them right, they do not, by *Soul*, here mean an independent, intelligent Substance, agreeable to our common Notions of Soul (for they deny the Existence of any such in Man, as before observed) but understand thereby only some kind of Spirit or vital Principle, by which any thing is upheld in being, and preserved from Dissolution.

Now tho' it be contrary to my Purpose, to prove or disprove any of the Opinions before mentioned, promising no more than to give the Reader a Sketch of the Reasonings made use of to support them, yet I cannot help observing here, that, if this be all they intend by the Word *Soul*, it is so far from being a God, that it is not so much as a Person; but only a meer Quality inherent in and dependent on Matter; which, being not at all proper to make a God of, we will, in complaisance to such great Masters of Reason, suppose they mean, by *Soul*, a Self-existent, rational Substance, distinct from Matter, as the common Notion is: And then the Question will be, whether, as in Man, it be *ex infusione*, or *ex traduce*? If the former, then he, that infused it, must and ought to be acknowledged as God; if the latter, then it can be no other than the Result of Matter, and therefore a necessary Dependent thereon, both *quoad fieri*, *quoad esse* & *quoad operari*, i.e. in its first Production, Subsistence and Operations, as is proved before; so that it can be no independent self-existent Being, consequently no God in any true and proper Sense.

Nor will it salve the Matter, if, by *Soul of the World*, they mean the World or Universe it self, both Soul and Body, as constituting one Person,

Person, endued with Life, Sense and Reason, of whom Man is the true Image or Representative; for even then their God will not have those Perfections necessary to compleat the Idea, which Reason has formed of him in the Minds of Men; nor consequently be the Object of their Worship and Adoration: For, to say nothing of his Immutability, Incorporeity, Unity, and the like (which are agreed to be essential Properties of Deity) he cannot be respected as the Creator of the World; for he could not create himself. He must never have been created at all, and so eternal *a parte ante*, according to *Aristotle*; or, if created, have been the Offspring of Chance, according to *Epicurus*: Neither of which Opinions is easy to conceive. The first is absolutely incomprehensible by us, as having no Idea of a Duration without a Beginning; and the other, though within the Verge of Possibility, (since 'tis possible to apprehend, that *Homer's Poems* or *Tully's Orations* might arise from the casual Jumbling of Letters together; and so the Universe by the fortuitous Concourse of Atoms, supposing both in Motion from all Eternity,) though this, I say, may be supposed within the Power of Chance to effect; yet the many plain Indications of Design, Fore-thought and Wisdom, that appear therein, seem to forbid such an Opinion.

However, let the World be made when and how it will, as it is certain, it did not make it self; so it is as certain, it can have no distinct Knowledge of its own Structure, nor any Intelligence of what passes within it self; no more than its little representative Man, who is intirely ignorant of what is transacted among the Particles which circulate round his Body, and perfectly unacquainted with the Viscera and Vessels that

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that go to its Composition, 'till they are exposed to his View in dead Subjects ; a Priviledge his great Archetype never had, nor can have.

Here then is a God less knowing than a Man ! which Imperfection alone, if no other, were sufficient to prove him to be none, in a proper and just Sense, however excellent and perfect it may be in other respects : Neither can it be supposed, that those, who make a Deity thereof, do believe it to deserve that Appellation truly and properly ; and therefore, seeing they acknowledge no other, it must be allowed, they deny the Existence of any God at all.

The same might farther be made evident, if need were, by observing, that, as Omnipotence cannot be predicated of this God *Cosmos* ; so neither can Impassibility, another essential Property of Deity strictly taken : That it is not an Attribute of the *Microcosm* woful Experience testifieth ; I myself am an unhappy Witness of the contrary at this present time, being in great pain ; and, if I am a part of the Godhead, (as every Man, and every Animal is, according to them) it seems to follow, by undeniable Consequence, the Godhead must suffer Pain too ; for it is agreed, I think, on all hands, that whatever the Parts of a *Compositum* are naturally and necessarily subject to, the Whole is naturally and necessarily subject to the same ; and, if so, I see not how they can vindicate their God, from sharing in all the Evils and Infirmities, both natural and moral, that Man and other parts of the World are liable to.

However, to avoid the Necessity of this Consequence, they pretend to say, there is no Evil at all of either kind in the Universe ; asserting, that Sin and Sickness, Poverty and Pain, and other

other Things we call Evils, are not really so ; but Goods, with respect to Nature in general, or the Universe, how different soever they may appear otherwise considered, and in a seperate View.

Now, how well this Doctrine will relish with, and be comprehended by, a Man labouring under the Racks of the Gout and Stone, the Want of Bread, Credit, inward Peace and the like, I cannot tell ; neither shall I spend time in Enquiring, my Business properly being, only to hint to the Reader some of the Arguments, on which this dangerous Notion, of there being no other God than the *Soul of the World*, in the Sense its Advocates mean it, is grounded : And, in doing this, I need not be long, since all are comprised in one single Proposition, namely, that, though in Nature the Variety of mixt Bodies is almost infinite, yet, that there neither is, nor can be, more than one similar homogeneous Substance, out which all are formed ; and, if so, that Substance must be God, if there be any at all. The Inference you'll allow to be just, and the Consequence undeniable, if there be in Nature but one Substance : But how that is to be proved I cannot apprehend ; since 'tis certain, we can have no true Idea of Substance, and therefore cannot, I think, reason and argue about it with Certainty and Satisfaction : Wherefore I shall trouble myself and Reader no farther with it, it being sufficient for my purpose, that it is a Doctrine openly and publickly taught, and that it cannot, by the Light of natural Reasoning, be proved absolutely false ; but, for any thing the Wisdom of this World teacheth, may be true,

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Thus have I gone thro' with a short Detail, as I promised, of these dangerous Opinions that are rife now in the World; by every one of which all the natural Man's hopes in God and in Christ are levelled with the Ground. Tho' I have drawn this black Troop together, and ranged them thus under one View; it is not for any Pleasure I take in the Sight of them, God knows; but that I might shew how unlikely it is, that carnal Logick, and vain Philosophy, the sole Parent of them, should be able to beget and establish a saving Faith, the very Reverse to them, on the Heart of Man: That it is a Task too hard for it, and what 'tis not naturally possible it should perform, appears not only from the Assistance it affords to the opposite Side, but also from express Texts of Scripture; particularly such as represent the Redemption of Man by Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, a Mystery incomprehensible by Man in his natural State, and even such as the very Angels were at a loss about. *We speak the Wisdom of God*, says the Apostle *, *in a Mystery, which to the Greeks (that is, the Philosophers and Men of Science, which Greece abounded with) is Foolishness, tho' the Wisdom of God and the Power of God in them that are saved.* Now if it be a Mystery, and if it appear Foolishness to the great Masters of Reason, and natural Light, how is it possible it should be explained and made credible to such without a supernatural Light, which is not attainable by their Arts and carnal Acquirements?

Again, *No one, saith our Lord †, can come to me, unless my Father draw him.* But how, I pray, does God draw a Man? not sure by the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, Rhetorick, Logick and

* 1 Cor. ii. 7.

† John iv. 44.

and Philosophy ; no, but by the Spirit and Power of some supernatural Evidence ; without which Unbelief, it is said *, would have been no Sin, in the time of Christ ; nor can it, I think, be reckoned so now. I know the great unenlightened Clerks will allow, that the Holy Spirit doth and must co-operate with us, in the Use of natural Reason, to make it effectual towards begetting a saving Faith in the Heart. But I say it hath nothing at all to do therein, being intirely against it ; and happy had it been for the *Christian* World, if it had never been applied thereto : Neither am I alone in this Opinion, of the Impossibility of propagating and establishing *Christian* Faith, upon the Foot of human Reason ; 'tis the Language of many of the natural and nominal *Christian* Teachers themselves : One of them, noted for Depth of natural Knowledge and carnal Wisdom, has in one of his Books these remarkable Words ; " One would think, says he, God had no Mind we should know any thing with Certainty ; by his having left so many Exceptions in his Word, against almost all the common Notions of Reason or natural Light .

But, to proceed, the Reader having had a flight Specimen or Sample of the Arguments, on which those antichristian Doctrines are grounded, the Question is, whether they appear to him with the Face of Reason or not ? If they do, ascertainly they must, if he sees with no Eyes but what are natural and carnal, he has then Reason to doubt the Truth of the *Christian* Faith ; and consequently, that Faith cannot be enjoined by a just and a good God, as a necessary Condition of his Salva-

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* Joh. xv. 24. † Mr. Baile's Philos. Com.

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tion, because it is not fully made known, nor clearly enough revealed to him ; for, if it were, he could have no reason for doubting it.

But suppose a Man to know nothing of the Arguments, upon which those Opinions are grounded, and to have only heard, that such there are propagated and maintained by Persons of reputed great Learning and Knowledge. If he be one who has his Religion at Heart, as every truly wise and considerate Person must, it will not be possible for him, in an unenlightened State, to help suspecting they may be true, since they are not self-evidently false ; and consequently, that his Religion may be false, it being not self-evidently true : And, it being a Matter of so great Moment to him, it will be as impossible for him, to sit down satisfied under such Doubts and Suspicions ; he will naturally and irresistably be prompted, if he have Leisure and Abilities for it, to examine and search into the Grounds and Occasions of his Uneasiness, there being no other Way for him to get rid of it.

Let us imagine then, he has done so, and that most carefully and impartially, or rather with no small Prejudice against them, and in favour of the Faith ; and that (after all the most diligent Attention to, and Consideration of, the Reasonings *pro* and *con*, joined with Prayers to God for his Blessing in the Use of these ordinary and natural Means) he cannot discover the Falshood of those Opinions, nor the consequent Truth of his Religion. May he not then hope, and pray, and reasonably expect, God should demonstrate the Truth to him by extraordinary and supernatural Means ?

Or, suppose this Person to be one who has neither Time nor Talents, for examining the Evidence

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dence produced in favour of those Infidel Nations, and working out the Truth through the Opposition of Sciences, falsely so called : For if it is to be done at all that Way, which I think not, 'tis certain, it cannot be hoped nor attempted but with the clearest Head, the nicest Judgment, and the greatest Skill in physical and metaphysical Subtilties ; which not one in a Thousand nor perhaps ten Thousand is Master of. Suppose, I say, this Man, who has read or heard of such Opinions in general only, and becomes uneasy, and unsettled in his Faith thereupon, be incapable of examining them by a tedious Attention to a long Chain of Reasoning, and such natural Means as the Nature of them require ; 'tis impossible he should ever be satisfied and convinced otherwise than by the supernatural Evidence of the Spirit, either external or internal ; he must else necessarily wander all his Life in the Dark, without any settled, satisfactory or saving Faith at all in Christ, or be content with an implicit Faith, which is the same as if he had none.

But how, say you, shall he gain and procure this supernatural Evidence ? I answer, by only going to God for it, by expecting, looking and waiting for it in and by the Ways he used of old to bestow it on those, who were effectually called, that is, by a Miracle, either outwardly or inwardly wrought : *For whosoever, saith Christ, cometh unto me, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God or not ?*

Nor indeed can it otherwise be supposed ; for as God is a God of Truth, a Lover of Truth, and his Petitioner a Seeker of nothing but Truth, one who desires to discover it, only that he may obey it, and not be led away with the Error of the Wicked ; 'tis but natural and reasonable

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to think, God should not or would not deny him such Evidence; but readily grant him, even almost at first Asking, being always more ready to hear, than we to pray, *i. e.* when we pray for the Spirit or spiritual Things; which is a necessary Distinction, that all good *Christians* ought to bear constantly in Mind, as that which will solve many Doubts, and prevent many hard Thoughts he will otherwise be apt to harbour; But this by the by.

I look on it then as a thing most certain, that this Man, who wants and prays to God for the Evidence of the Spirit, is gratified and supplied therewith, and all Clouds of Distrust and Uncertainty dispelled out of his Soul, by some supernatural Manifestation, external or internal. However, I know the great Doctors in Theology will not allow this to be certain, nor so much as probable. What! say they, must God work a Miracle for the Conviction of this Man? Yes, say I, if he desires and prays to God for such Conviction; being not able, with his utmost Endeavours, to get it by any other Means. Is it a Trouble, think they, to God to work a Miracle? or is the Saving a single Soul in his esteem not worth it? Our Lord, I am sure, seemed to have different Sentiments of it, when he spake of the Joy there is in Heaven, upon the Repentance of a single Sinner.

Besides, what did he do and suffer, both in the Flesh and Spirit, to testify his Love of Souls! That alone is sufficient, I think, to prove, a single Soul of more Value with him, than these great Scribes seem willing to admit: And I believe it to be so great, if I may not say, I certainly know it, that God would not refuse to exert his Power beyond the ordinary Course of Nature

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for saving such a Soul, under the Circumstances above described ; and whatever he does above or beyond the ordinary Course of Nature, whether external or internal, is a Miracle.

I conclude it therefore impossible, such a Man should be refused or denied what he sue s for at the Throne of Grace ; because, if he be, he must, I think, be inevitably lost : For will he not then have Reason to conclude in favour of those Opinions, and against the Faith ? If he hesitated before, and were held in a State of Neutrality between them, or more inclined to the Side of the Latter, would not such a Refusal, and his frustrated Expectations, effectually turn the Scale ? And, if leaning the other Way before, would it be in his Power to help coming over intirely to it, without farther doubt or Scruple ? 'Tis impossible, I think, it should ; since he will not be able to suggest to himself any Reason, why God should not condescend to him herein, if he ever did to any one ; which must be supposed, or our Faith has no Foundation. He must know that if God be what he is believed to be, by all who believe any, and what he must necessarily be, if he be at all in a true Sense ; he must know, I say, that God is not ignorant of his Wants and his Wishes ; that he wills and desires he should keep the Faith and obey the Truth, if he has made it necessary to his Salvation ; and that he has Power to effect, by extraordinary Means, what cannot be obtained by ordinary.

What then is the Reason those Means are denied him ? I do not see how he can account to himself for it, but either by concluding, that the common Notions, he and the *Christian* World in general have entertained concerning God and Reli-

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Religion, are false, and those others true ; or else, that God has not made the Knowledge and Belief of this Religion necessary to Man's Salvation, but that, if any such Thing as Salvation be, it is absolutely ordained for every Man, without Condition, Reservation or Danger of Forfeiture, which is not impossible to suppose of Goodness, Bounty and Benignity that are infinite. But to think and teach, as some of great Names plainly do, that God has absolutely decreed one Part of Mankind only to Happiness, and the other to eternal Misery, without any Regard to their respective Merits, and even before they are born, is directly inconsistent with the divine Goodness ; and can be believed or maintained by none but the Unenlightened, who judge not according to the Spirit, but according to the Letter.

But, to return to the Case in Hand, I can conceive no other Reason this Man can frame to himself, for God's refusing him the Means so reasonable and necessary for the Succour of his Faith, and Salvation of his Soul, but that which is supposed a common Practice with the Deity, to wit, the Trying and Proving him : But, not to say how ill those Terms agree with his Attribute of Omnipotence, Proving and Trying, however reasonable in some Cases, is not so at all in this.

To prove or try a Thing consistently with Reason, or indeed common Sense, it ought to be provided with all Things natural and necessary for Performing what it is tried for. To try whether a Fish would swim without Water, or a Bird fly without Wings, would be no small Absurdity you'll allow ; and it would be no less irrational, to try any Thing beyond its natural Powers of Bearing, as a Thread with the Weight of a Mill-stone, or a Venice-glass with an Anvil and Hammer.

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I have heard of one, who tried whether his Horse could be brought to live without Meat; and, the Story says, as soon as he had effected it, the Horse unfortunately died. The same Fate must unavoidably attend all Opinions or Matters of Faith that are not, or cannot, be supported by good Evidence, either natural or supernatural: For Evidence is as essentially necessary to the Life of Faith, as Food is to that of an Horse; and, to try whether it would or could subsist without it, equally impracticable and ridiculous. For the Trial here is not, whether this Man will believe what God says, or do what God commands; but, whether God has said or commanded this or that, which is supposed to be a disputed Point, he cannot decide by the common and ordinary Ways of Reason and Argumentation; and therefore begs God, to convince him by some extraordinary way; which, we say, is but reasonable to expect God should do, since this Man's endless Happiness or Misery must be thought to depend thereon; and to try him without it, is to try him without such Requisites as are reasonable and necessary, towards his Doing what is expected from him.

What would you think of a Monarch, who, knowing he was reported to have abdicated the Government, and that the Genuineness of his Laws were doubted and denied, should, to try the Loyalty and Affection of his Subjects, hide himself away, and refuse to give Audience to those who petitioned him for Satisfaction in these Matters; and then at last butcher them, for disputing his Acts, and calling the Reality of his Administration in Question?

To try and prove Men in such a Manner argues not only Weakness, but more Wickedness

ness and inhumane Malice, than is conceiveable of any but a *Nero*, or a *Caligula*: And yet, this must be supposed of God, if, to try a Man, he deny him the necessary Means of a saving Faith, and then damn him for not believing.

However, there are some who seem to be of Opinion, God may do this, that is, he may deny a Man the necessary Means of a perfect Faith, and certain Knowledge of the Condition of his Salvation, and yet expect he should behave and act in the same manner, as if he knew it never so fully: Because, say they, the least Degree of Probability, or but a bare Possibility, is sufficient in common Prudence to oblige him so to do; and that therefore, he may reasonably both be tried, whether he will act in that Manner or not, and also justly be punished or rewarded, as he acquits himself one way or t'other.

Run the Risque, says the Divine, of being saved; 'tis possible there may be a God, a Heaven, and a Hell; if there be, you are safe and happy for ever; if not, you can lose nothing by it.

This indeed is Reasoning that cannot be withstood, provided it were true, that, if a Man's Hopes proved vain, he would lose nothing by it: But that is what cannot be allowed; for he would lose his Labour, which, when rightly considered, will appear, I doubt, no small Matter. I am sure it is represented both in the Scriptures, and in Books and Pulpits, by these very Persons who here seem to make it nothing, so great as to be above the Power of meer Man to perform, without a more than ordinary Assistance of the Holy Spirit, agreeable to the Doctrine the truly enlightened, tho' scarce visible, Church of Christ teacheth.

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Christian Faith asserted. 49

The Work of a sincere Christian, necessary to his Salvation, which is the labour we speak of, is compared to a Race, a Fighting, a Wrestling, a Warfare, a strait and troublesome Road, and held out to us under such other Images as sufficiently denote the Troubles and Difficulties he must encounter, that will compleat the Work ; and less will not serve his Turn. To do it by halves, and to be almost a *Christian*, will signify nothing ; he had as good be no *Christian* at all.

This Soul-saving Work of a true *Christian*, is not so easy a Matter, if we are taught right, as the World imagines. It will not be sufficient for him to keep clear of heinous Offences, scandalous Crimes, and gross Enormities. He must not only deny himself all Manner of Un-godliness and worldly Lust, but a thousand other little Liberties and Levities the generality of the carnal World, tho' reputedly good *Christians*, indulge themselves in. For he will be called to account for every idle Expression and Imagination as well as Action : And the criminal Words and Actions of others, which he hears or sees, without due Reproof and Correction, will be charged upon him as Crimes of his own committing, and, without true Repentance, as effectually damn him as if they were so.

In short, if he will do any Thing to the Purpose, (and if not, he had as good sit still, and do nothing at all) he must struggle and strive, wrestle and contend, with his natural Affections, to beat down the Body, crucify the Flesh, and be mortified to the World, and all the Pomps and Vanities thereof ; he must labour to be as perfect as possibly he can, as his Father which is in Heaven is perfect ; he must grow daily in

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Grace, and improve in Holiness; for, *non progre-di*, say our spiritual Pastors, *est regredi*: He must therefore examine himself as to this Matter daily, and not mind earthly Things, more than is absolutely necessary, but have his Conversation in Heaven, and be so spiritualized and transformed, in the renewing of his Mind, that he may have a true Taste and Relish of those spiritual Joys in which Heaven consists; otherwise it will not be a Heaven to him, when he comes into it.

Now all this must be done by him, who would do it effectually, and that also to the utmost of his Power and Capacity. The wilful Neglect or Omission of any Part of it, without true Repentance, will render the rest all vain and useless: And, if it be never so perfect and compleat, without a true Faith in *Christ*, according to the Tenor of the *Gospel*, it will be equally insignificant and unavailable.

However we will suppose, that those, who think a Man obliged in common Prudence to act in this Case at Midnight, as he would at Noon-Day, mean only in Matters of Practice, and not in Matters of Faith; which, I presume, they will allow not to be in his Power, as has been before demonstrated: And, if this be their Meaning, they must suppose, a Man may be saved without a stedfast Faith in *Christ*, or the firm Belief of the Truth of the Scriptures and other Articles of the *Christian Dispensation*; which yet is the only Foundation, on which the Reason of his so acting can be grounded; for therein only are made known to him the Commands of God, and the Promises and Threatnings, the Heaven and the Hell, that are to induce him to obey them: So that, according to this Opinion, God may deny a Man the necessary Means of such Faith or Belief,

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lief, as is the only Reason and Ground he can have for his Actions or Practice ; and yet expect the same Practice and Behaviour from him, as if he had supplied him with such Means : But this every one must know to be inconsistent with his Attributes of Goodness, Justice and Equity.

To illustrate this, by a familiar Instance, let us suppose a Servant should break his Rest, climb over a Mountain, and travel a long Journey through difficult Roads in bad Weather, in hopes of being rewarded by his Master for it, without knowing whether he expected it, or would be pleased with it, and without imagining his Master could be any way benefitted thereby : As such a Practice must be allowed very ridiculous in the Servant, so must the expecting it from him, and trying him therein, be in the Master ; and all Rewards and Punishments, annexed to such Kind of uncertain Services, equally irrational and unjustifiable ; for, if he was rewarded, it could be for nothing but playing the Fool ; common Sense might have told him, if his Master had designed him such a Service, he would plainly have signified his Pleasure to him ; and his not doing so, was sufficient to convince him, he expected no such Thing from him.

But, instead of a Servant, let us now suppose him a Son, and the Master a very wise Man, as well as a most kind and indulgent Father, careful, studious and tender of his Son's Safety and Welfare, beyond what is common : Also, that the Son, instead of voluntarily undertaking this Task, is advised by another to do it ; assuring him his Father expects it from him, and will reward him for it. Let us then suppose he is told by another, he does not expect nor require it of

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him; and, more than that, assures him his Father is dead and not in Being.

Now what in common Prudence ought the Son to do in this Case? He is not willing to be at the Trouble of performing this Service; and yet, to please so loving a Parent, and to obtain so great a Reward, suppose a Crown, he would not scruple at ten times as much, provided he were sure that would be the Consequence.

The first Thing then he ought to do is, to enquire into the Characters and Credit of those differing Authors or Monitors, and the Grounds they pretend to have for what they respectively assert: Accordingly, he demands their several Proofs; and the first says, he has Letters under his Father's Hand for it; which the Son being well acquainted with, desires nothing more for his Satisfaction. But the other, instead of producing them, shewshim only some old Affidavits of Persons, he never knew, the Import of which is, that they once saw such Letters of his Father's. Now, if the Want of seeing the Originals be Reason sufficient for him to reject or suspect the Evidence of such Affidavits, as I believe will be granted, what Regard will he pay them, if they contain Things, which he himself knows or thinks to be demonstrably false and erroneous; as he must, if he can see into them no deeper than the Letter, nor have any Light to guide him, but what is natural?

The next Question then will be, how the other proves his Father to be dead? or, if alive, that he does not expect this Service from him? Which (tho' the Want of good Proof and clear Evidence that he doth is, considering the Father's great and good Qualities, next to a Demonstration he does not) yet he pretends to prove

prove it many other Ways ; but by one more particularly, which seems to carry great Force with it, in that it is founded on Experience, to wit, that he does not appear openly, nor meddle at all, that any one knows, in the Management of his proper Affairs.

This you will grant must naturally put the Son upon trying to speak with his Father, and going where he knows he must be, if he be at all : He calls upon him, and acquaints him with his Business ; beseeching him, in the most passionate and importunate Manner, to satisfy him, whether he hears him or not ; (as he must, if alive) and, if he do that he will signify his Will and Pleasure to him, being ready and willing to execute it to the utmost of his Power.

Suppose now a considerable time pass away, without the Doors being opened, or any notice at all taken of him or his Petitions, tho' all this while he labours under great Anxiety, Trouble and Uneasiness of Mind on the Occasion, which the Father knows, it in being ; and also, that his Son is at the same time powerfully sollicited with Offers of many great Advantages, which however are designed for his Ruin, to desist from his Suit, and have no farther Regard to one, who, if he be alive, seems as if he were dead ; at least does not act as if he were his Friend, much less his Father. For if he were, 'tis not possible, say the Tempters, he should deny you so reasonable a Request, and suffer you to lay under so much Perplexity and Disquiet of Mind, when he might relieve you with but a Word speaking.

Now this being plainly the Inference, which follows the Circumstances of this Fact, what could induce the Son to undertake the Work pressed upon him by the first, and resist the Offers

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fers, or disbelieve the Reports, made him by the latter of his Directors? would he not have Reason to think his Father dead? or, if he knew or thought him to be alive, could he think he expected him to perform this Service? or, if he did, that he deserved the Name of a Father, at least, such an one as his general Character represented him, to wit, one who made Reason, and natural Affection the Rule of his Conduct and Behaviour towards his Son; especially, if he secretly determined not only to disinherit him, but also to have him hanged if he failed of performing the Service, or desisted from attending at his Door, in compliance with those who persuaded him so to do? Can it be imagined that any one, worthy the Name of a Man, could act with so little Concern and Regard for another's Safety, that he had the least love for, and did not wish and intend his Ruin; much less, that a Parent should expose a Child in such a Manner, and deal so hardly with him by way of Trial and Experiment, and that too when he could need no Information in the Case? In short, 'tis contradictory to common Sense, and inconsistent with common Goodness and Humanity to imagine it.

I therefore boldly pronounce and affirm, that if a Man cannot satisfy himself of the Falsity of the mentioned Opinions, and the consequent Truth of our holy Religion, by the ordinary and common Means of natural Reason; and God think fit to deny him such as are extraordinary, which I believe is never the Case; yet it is not, nor cannot be on, account of his trying him, in the Manner by some imagined; it being perfectly incompatible both with his moral and physical Perfections. For to try whether a Man will live.

live the Life of a *Christian*, without the Faith of a *Christian*, and to expect and require him so to do, is to expect and require what is more impracticable than making Brick without Straw; and as inconsistent and unreasonable, as to expect and require him to walk and work in the Dark, as regularly and exactly as in the clearest Light.

Upon the Whole then, the Matter is come to this; either a Man may, by the ordinary Ways of Reasoning, demonstrate the Truth of the Christian Faith, which I think not possible, for the Reasons before given; or, that such Faith is not necessary to Salvation, or that, if it be, it is proved, and must be proved, to him by Ways *supernatural* and extraordinary.

Now there are but two such Ways, that God has ever used for that Purpose, to wit, sensible Miracles, by which God speaks outwardly to a Man's Eyes, Ears, &c. and the Operations of the Spirit, as much miraculous as the other, by which he speaks inwardly to the Mind and Heart: But it is agreed on all Hands, sensible Miracles are and have ceased above these thousand Years. What remains then, but either that *Christianity* is, and has been, all this while without a Witness in the World; or, that the *Holy Spirit* is that Witness, subsisting and abiding in the Hearts of the sanctified and illuminated Few, that have been, and shall be, saved?

And what now is this, but the Doctrine of that long despised, poor, obscure Sect of *Christians*, called *Quakers*? which however is the only true Doctrine, and they the only Sect who teach and hold the Truth as it is in *Jesus*; having that Unction from the *Holy One**, which teacheth them all Things pertaining to Life and Godliness;

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times : So that they have no need to learn it from the weak and beggerly Elements of vain Philosophy and human Wisdom. If they had, it would be impossible for them to fish it out that Way, or any other Way, but that just mentioned, *which is the Way, the Truth, and the Life* *. It is Life, because it leadeth unto Life ; and Truth, because it is no Lye. And they who have received this Unction of the Father, and know all Things, know that it is Truth and no Lye, because he abideth in them ; and hereby they know that he abideth in them †, even by the Spirit he hath given them.

*Where now is the wise Man? where is the Scribe? where is the Disputer of this World? — Hath not God chosen the weak Things of this World, to confound the Things that are Mighty? And Things that are of no Esteem, and that are despised, hath God chosen, and Things which are not seen, to bring to nought Things that are: That no Flesh might glory in his Sight; but, as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord**.*

And now what will the Sons of Science and Syllogism, the Lawn and Scarlet, say to this ! Will they, with the united Force of their whole black Army, tho' kept in constant Pay for the Purpose, be able to stand the Shock of the black Troop of Opinions and Cavils before mentioned; which human Wisdom, and carnal Reason, whom they think so much in their Interest, has mustered up against them, and openly leads them on to storm Heaven, and drive Christian Faith out of the World ? Will they be able, by the same natural Force of Reason, to demonstrate them all false, and our holy Religion

* Joh. xiv. 6. † Joh. iv. 24. ** 1 Cor. i. 20, 27, &c.

gion true? Will they be able solidly and soundly to vindicate the Scriptures in the mentioned Instances, by Dint of Argument and fair Reasoning, without Shifts and Subterfuges, arbitrary Constructions, and groundless Suppositions, for which there is not the least Shadow or Colour, either in Reason or Scripture, that the natural Eye can discover? Do they think they are capable by natural Means, and with no more than the ordinary Blessing of God on their Endeavours, to propagate the Faith among *Heathens* and *Mahometans*, or convince a single considerate *Indian*, who may not be thought so much prepossessed in favour of another Religion, of the Truth of *Christianity*? If they do, they would do well to give us a Scheme of the Method they would take, and the Arguments they would insist on; the World would be infinitely obliged to them for it, as well as bettered by it.

But if they find themselves unprovided with natural Means for this Work, let them acknowledge the Truth to be in and with the People before spoken of; who, tho' but a small Flock, are the true Sheep-Fold, who hear and know the Voice of the true Shepherd and Bishop of Souls: Souls, I say, the only Province on Earth, in which and over which he exercises his Episcopal or Priestly Office; the only Kingdom, on this Side Heaven, wherein he exercises his kingly Power, evidently and undoubtedly, tho' spiritually and invisibly. Great Churches and gilded Palaces know no more of him than his Name, he having no more to do in them, or with them, than other Houses; all Churches and all Kingdoms, but those of Souls, are Strangers to his true and proper Administrations.

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This I profess, as my sincere and steadfast Opinion; not that I am, in every Respect, one of those People whose Doctrine I vindicate: For I think Religion not to consist in the Use of any certain Words, or Modes of Speech or Dress; though I intirely approve of a grave Habit, as well as a grave and serious Behaviour. But as to their Opinions of the Insufficiency of natural Light, and the Certainty and Necessity of Supernatural, to wit, the Internal Testimony of the Spirit, for manifesting the Truth of Divine Revelation, and witnessing the Reality of the deep Things of God, in the hidden Mystery of Man's Redemption by Christ, to the Soul; in these Things I am intirely with them, as believing, or rather certainly knowing, them to be right; and that no Objection can be offered against them, but what will equally affect those of the first Christians, who will be allowed, I suppose, to have been the true Church of Christ: And, if they were the true Church, then the Quaker-Sett is so now, or there is none upon Earth; which I am ready farther to make out and demonstrate, if, after what has been said, the World can be so blind as not to see it, which may possibly be, since Light may shine in Darkness, and the Darkness comprehend it not.

JUGS

F I N I S.